



Reporting firefighter injuries

The scene in the photo above demonstrates one of the dangers faced by those in the fire service. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), nationally there were 4,190 firefighters injured while responding to or returning from incidents in 2012 (the most recent data available). Another 44,250 firefighters were injured while performing duties on-scene and 20,960 were injured during non-incident related activities.

Many fire service personnel involved with incident reporting in New Hampshire have shared that they were unaware of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) standards on reporting firefighter injuries. Let's take a look at what those standards are.

Under the NFIRS standards, the Fire Service Casualty Module should be used to report **all** injuries, deaths, or exposures to fire service personnel. This includes casualties that occur during incident

responses **or** during non-incident events such as station duties or training.

Does this mean that a report should be filed for every minor injury such as a paper cut? No.

An injury is defined as physical damage to a person that requires (or should require) treatment by a registered EMT or someone of higher medical training, or that results in at least one day of restricted activity immediately following the injury.

It is just as important to track why and how firefighters are being injured while working emergency scenes as it is to track non-incident related injuries. Doing this helps prevent future injuries and keeps staff safe. The nature of what the fire service does makes it critically important that every staff member, paid or volunteer, is healthy and able to perform their duties to the fullest. Every firefighter that is injured and not able to perform his or her duties is one less resource available to a department. This can easily result in overtime costs in career agencies and in volunteer agencies this means one less person available to respond to incidents in your community.

By reporting firefighter injury information through NFIRS, not only is your agency able to easily identify what is causing your staff to be injured, but that same information is shared at the state and national level. This cooperative approach yields huge dividends to the fire service as a whole. In contrast, by not providing this information, our collective ability to know what is causing firefighter injuries is hampered. In turn, the ability to properly and effectively prevent those injuries is also hampered.